

AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

This listing of claims replaces all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the present application.

IN THE CLAIMS:

Claim 1. (Currently Amended) A method for inhibiting a ~~the~~ degradation of brain natriuretic peptide in a specimen, which comprises

collecting the specimen containing brain natriuretic peptide into a container, wherein a ~~the~~ face coming into contact with the specimen is made of or coated with a material selected from the group consisting of silicone and plastics, and

excluding an ~~the~~ addition of any inhibiting agents which inhibit the degradation of brain natriuretic peptide,

by which the ratio of residual BNP immunoreactivity is 50% or more after 24 hours standing at 25°C.

Claim 2. (Canceled).

Claim 3. (Previously Presented) The method as claimed in claim 1, wherein said specimen is obtained from a human, dog, pig, rat or mouse.

Claim 4-5. (Canceled).

Claim 6. (Currently Amended) A method for measuring brain natriuretic peptides in a specimen, which comprises

collecting the specimen containing brain natriuretic peptides into a container, wherein a ~~the~~ face coming into contact with the specimen is made of or coated with a material selected from the group consisting of silicone and plastics, and

excluding an ~~the~~ addition of any inhibiting agents which inhibit a degradation of brain natriuretic peptide; and

measuring the mammalian natriuretic peptides by standard means, wherein the ratio of residual BNP immunoreactivity is 50% or more after 24 hours standing at 25°C.

Claims 7-11. (Canceled).

Claim 12. (Currently Amended) A method for inhibiting a ~~the~~ degradation of brain natriuretic peptide in whole blood or blood plasma, which comprises

collecting the whole blood or blood plasma into a container, wherein a ~~the~~ face coming into contact with the whole blood or

blood plasma is made of or coated with a material selected from the group consisting of silicone and plastics, and

excluding an ~~the~~ addition of any inhibiting agents which inhibit the degradation of brain natriuretic peptide,

by which the ratio of residual BNP immunoreactivity is 50% or more after 24 hours standing at 25°C.

Claim 13. (Currently Amended) A method for inhibiting an ~~the~~ activation of a substance degrading brain natriuretic peptide in a specimen, which comprises

collecting the specimen containing brain natriuretic peptide into a container, wherein a ~~the~~ face coming into contact with the specimen is made of or coated with a material selected from the group consisting of silicone and plastics, and

excluding an ~~the~~ addition of any inhibiting agents which inhibit a degradation of brain natriuretic peptide,

by which the ratio of residual BNP immunoreactivity is 50% or more after 24 hours standing at 25°C.